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1951

INAUGURAL ADDRESS
OF
THE HONORABLE
JAMES F. BYRNES
AS GOVERNOR
OF
SOUTH CAROLINA



COLUMBIA
JANUARY 16, 1951

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STATE DOCUMENTS

INAUGURAL ADDRESS OF THE HONORABLE JAMES
F. BYRNES AS GOVERNOR OF SOUTH CAROLINA
IN COLUMBIA, SOUTH CAROLINA,
JANUARY 16, 1951

The large percentage of votes received by me in the Democratic Primary last summer, together with the many evidences of good will received since then, have made me very grateful, very humble and somewhat embarrassed. I am embarrassed because I realize fully my inability to accomplish in the administration of state affairs what is expected of me. Even so it is my purpose and my determination to give to this State and its people the best there is in me.

Within the next few days I shall send to the Legislature specific recommendations on a number of subjects. At this time I refer generally to a few.

I recommend that the Legislature submit to the people at the next General Election a proposal for a Constitutional Convention to draft a new Constitution.

I recommend that the Legislature ratify the three Amendments to the Constitution approved at the recent election, including the amendment repealing the provision requiring payment of a poll tax as a requisite for suffrage.

My investigation of the State government confirms an opinion I have long held, based on knowledge of the Federal Government, that the nearest approach to immortality on earth is a government bureau.

A beginning has been made to effect the purposes of our Reorganization Act but we still have in the Executive Department more than 50 independent agencies and commissions. I urge that many of these be consolidated, and some abolished.

The people of South Carolina are a law abiding people. Criminal statistics show that in proportion to our population, we have fewer violators of the law than most states of the Union. However, we do have a few people who want to take the law into their own hands and regulate the morals and habits of others.

If a man violates the law he should be arrested by local officers. If they fail to act and complaint is made to the State Law Enforcement Division, the offender will be arrested. If a man does not violate the law, no group of men has the right to assault him or to threaten and intimidate him.

I recommend that the Legislature enact a law similar to the Alabama statute prohibiting persons over 16 years of age parading on the streets or highways while masked, and also to prohibit such persons entering upon the premises of a citizen to threaten or intimidate him.

In this State there can be but one government, that must be a government of the people under law. There can be but one Governor, elected by the people, whose duty it is to see that the law is enforced. I am going to be that Governor. I do not need the assistance of the Ku Klux Klan nor do I want interference by the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People.

If we demand respect for state rights, we must discharge state responsibilities. A primary responsibility of a State is the education of its children. While we have done much, we must do more.

It must be our goal to provide for every child in this State, white or colored, at least a graded school education.

We must grant an increase in the pay for school teachers, and we must improve our school transportation system.

We must have a state school building program. We will never be able to give the boys and girls in the rural sections of the State the school buildings and equipment to which they are entitled as long as these facilities are furnished only by taxes on the real property of a school district.

Funds spent for school buildings by local governments should be supplemented by a state building program. This program will involve the issuance over a period of twenty years of bonds to provide 75 million dollars for school construction, which should begin as soon as the national emergency permits. I shall submit a special message to the General Assembly as to this program.

One cannot speak frankly on this subject without mentioning the race problem. It is our duty to provide for the races substantial equality in school facilities. We should do it because it is right. For me that is sufficient reason.

If any person wants an additional reason, I say it is wise. Our Constitution provides there shall be separate schools for white and colored children. More than half a century ago the U. S. Supreme Court held that such a provision was not in conflict

with the United States Constitution provided the facilities for the races were equal.

Last Spring the Democratic Administration in Washington caused the United States Attorney General to intervene in several cases and urge that the Court declare unconstitutional any law requiring separation of the races. The Supreme Court did not pass upon the question.

Cases are now pending in this and in other States which will go to the Supreme Court, in which the complainants follow the lead of the President and ask the Court to abolish segregation in all schools. We must assume the Administration will again urge the Court to repudiate what is now the law of the land.

I am hopeful that the Supreme Court will deny this appeal. The Court appreciates the necessity for continuity of law and the evil results that flow from uncertainty as to the law. I am hopeful, too, that if in a given case there is shown an honest effort to provide substantially equal facilities, it will favorably influence the opinion of the Court.

This is not a local problem. The races are separated in the schools of at least seventeen States of the Union, as well as the District of Columbia, under the jurisdiction of the Congress.

What the leaders of the Administration do not realize is that if they succeed in abolishing segregation they will thereby endanger the public school system in many States.

The overwhelming majority of colored people in this State do not want to force their children into white schools. Just as the negro preachers do not want their congregations to leave them and attend the churches of white people, the negro teachers do not want their pupils to leave them and attend schools for white children.

Except for the professional agitators, what the colored people want, and what they are entitled to, is equal facilities in their schools. We must see that they get them.

It is unfortunate that in this perilous period the President in his budget message of yesterday should advocate an increase in non-defense expenditures and urge political proposals and socialistic programs which are certain to divide our people. We will continue to oppose such proposals. But let there be no misunderstanding. The Governor of South Carolina and the

people of South Carolina will loyally support the foreign policy of the Government of the United States.

In these days when the free world is threatened by a fanatical ideology, bent on world conquest, our duty to this Republic and to the world must be met with a display of unity. This is not only our duty, it is our great opportunity.

The last vestige of isolationism left the shores of America on the wings of the plane that carried the first atomic bomb to Hiroshima.

That bomb brought an end to the war with Japan. The ending of that war brought to us the leadership of the free peoples of the world. We in America must give to them the leadership expected of us because we love peace and because we have power.

In the defense of our common liberty, there is no place for political partisanship. At the water's edge, we must all stand together. A united America is civilization's last clear chance for survival. A divided America is the greatest temptation to Soviet conquest.

We cannot meet the perils of this day with a Republican policy or a Democratic policy. We must have an American policy.

The President of the United States is responsible for the conduct of our foreign affairs. He cannot abdicate his responsibility. But in the exercise of that difficult task he needs and should have the cooperation of all loyal Americans, regardless of our differences on domestic questions.

If we are to have a bi-partisan policy, the President should consult the leaders of the minority political party before and not after basic decisions of policy are made. Once decisions are made, consultation is only a sham.

A non-partisan or bi-partisan policy does not call for the suppression of honest debate and discussion. Neither the Executive or the Legislative branch of government has a monopoly of wisdom and virtue.

Responsible leaders can and should be assisted by constructive discussion of our foreign policies but these are not ordinary times and we should weigh our words.

In the United Nations Charter we pledged ourselves to resist aggression. When the Communists in North Korea invaded the South Korean Republic we redeemed that pledge.

We have borne the brunt of that fight. We were disappointed that the Nations which voted with us to condemn the aggression did not contribute more troops to fight the invaders. But we discharged our duty. The North Korean aggressors were driven back and rendered powerless.

Then when the people of America were made happy by the hope that our boys would be on their way home by Christmas, we were confronted with another and totally different war of aggression. Communist China attacked the forces of the United Nations.

They have now invaded South Korea. The greatly outnumbered soldiers of the United Nations, fighting as valiantly as have any soldiers in the history of the world, are forced to retreat.

No army has ever fought with such crippling limitations. Our air force controls the sky but cannot attack the supply bases of the enemy in Manchuria. In effect, our right arm is tied as the enemy advances.

The United States has called on the United Nations to declare Communist China guilty of aggression. The governments that did not hesitate promptly to brand North Korea as an aggressor hesitate now to declare Communist China an aggressor.

As Chinese Communists daily kill the soldiers of the United Nations, the governments for which they die are fearful of offending China and the Soviets.

If the United Nations is unwilling promptly to declare China an aggressor, authorize our Air Force to attack the supply bases of the enemy, and join in blockading China, then our forces should be withdrawn from Korea.

I am aware that some of our allies fear if China is declared an aggressor and the air force authorized to bomb supply bases in Manchuria, it may provoke Russia to war. That is the counsel of fear which I reject. If Russia is ready and willing to make war on the United Nations, she will want no such excuse.

But if the time is approaching when Russia will be ready to go to war, then it is not wise to have our army divided between Korea and Europe. To my mind western Europe is an indispensable first line in the defense of civilization. We should concentrate our forces in Europe.

It is said that western European governments have not raised armies for their own defense. In view of our record, we should not complain. In March 1948, after Czechoslovakia had fallen, I made a speech at the South Carolina Military Academy urging that it was so clear the Soviets planned domination of the world, we should cease all non-defense expenditures and immediately draft men to increase our military forces. Many others made similar pleas. Little was done.

On the home front similar delay in freezing prices and wages will hamper the government and punish the people. In the last war when I was appointed Director of Economic Stabilization I found that the failure to freeze prices and wages at the outset threatened the economy. Upon my recommendation President Roosevelt issued the Hold-the-Line Order. That line was held. Every day we delay freezing prices and wages across the board, will cause more inequities, higher prices and additional costs to the taxpayer.

It took Korea to waken us from our slumbers. Now we must rouse our friends in Europe. We must impress upon them that the time has come to stop talking and begin action.

Since last September we have been discussing with France and Britain what limitations should be placed on military forces recruited in Western Germany.

The German Republic that we sponsored should be treated on terms of equality. Only in this way can we expect men to have their hearts in a cause. More than a million of the German war prisoners taken to Russia have never been returned. They constitute a million reasons why the people of Western Germany, if treated fairly, will fight with us. And they know how to fight.

Since 1945, France has used its influence to prevent Britain and the United States from sending an Ambassador to Spain. We should send Spain more than an Ambassador. We should send military supplies as rapidly as possible. Spain has more divisions of trained soldiers than any of the Western European governments.

We should seek the friendship of Tito and furnish military supplies to Yugoslavia. Tito has trained soldiers. They are brave soldiers.

We should impress upon Britain, France and all of Western Europe, that we want the American soldiers who fight in Europe to have the help of the soldiers of every nation willing to oppose aggression by the atheistic Communists of Russia.

The argument that additional troops should not be sent to Europe cannot be ignored. It cannot be answered by the statement that we must comply with our obligations. The Atlantic Treaty and the United Nations do not require us to act except in case of aggression. But there is a requirement more urgent than these,—the requirement of self-defense. Self-preservation demands that we act before the Soviets strike.

If we wait until the Soviet troops invade Western Europe, it will be too late for us to send an army to Europe to be integrated with an army of Western Europe under the command of General Eisenhower.

The people of America have confidence in the intelligence and the integrity of General Eisenhower. If after investigation he is satisfied that the governments of Western Europe are ready and willing to make sacrifices and put armies into the field to defend their own freedom, the American people will accept his recommendation.

I hope Congress will then adopt an affirmative proposal that the United States should furnish its proportion of that army of freedom. Congressional approval will restore unity. It will put an end to debate at home. It will put at rest one of the greatest fears in the minds and hearts of the people of Western Europe,—the fear of a divided America.

I have no fear of what Congress will do. The people of America do not want to sit on the side lines and permit Stalin to take control of all Europe.

They know that when the Soviets reach the shores of the Atlantic, their atomic bombs will be 2,000 miles nearer our shores. They know, too, that if we abandon Europe to the Soviets, we will abandon the air bases now available to us, from which, in case of aggression, we can send planes to drop bombs on Russia.

No man knows what the Kremlin will do. But I know that the Soviet leaders understand only the language of force.

A firm stand by a united people may deter them from war. A timid course by a divided people certainly will encourage them to make war.

Such a war would threaten the destruction of every vestige of our freedom,—religious, economic and political. I pray that it will never come. But should it come, the nation may rely upon it that the people of South Carolina will do their full part, fighting for God and for Country.